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UNCLAS PANAMA 000898

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PANAMA SUPPORTS THE SECRETARY'S COMMUNITY OF
DEMOCRACIES ELECTION STANDARDS INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 71931

Panama views positively Reftel concept paper and will support the Secretary's initiative to develop universal election standards and to create an impartial body to analyze electoral practices. Vice Foreign Minister Ricardo Duran told POL Counselor on April 20 that he would support the initiative in Santiago. Duran said he had discussed the initiative with Panamanian Electoral Commission President Eduardo Valdes, who also liked the idea. Duran pointed out that Panama's electoral commission gained international stature when it was asked to participate in Iraq's electoral steering committee that organized the recent Iraqi elections. Since 1989 and the ouster of military dictator Manuel Noriega, Panama has held three free and fair national elections, Duran added.

WATT